

NEW SHOREHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Block Island School
December 19, 2011
7:00 p.m.

The New Shoreham School Committee met in open session on Monday, December 19, 2011, in the media center of the Block Island School. Chair William Padien called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Elizabeth Connor, Patricia Doyle, Ann Hall, Sean McGarry, and William Padien. Robert Hicks was also in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

A motion (Hall, Connor) was made to approve the minutes of the meeting held on November 21, 2011, as presented. Pat Doyle wanted her comment regarding the school calendar clarified (see page 2, paragraph 2 – “Pat Doyle was in favor of the calendar that works best for education and not necessarily for the convenience of the parents”). She explained that the School Committee needs to consider accommodating the parents and that one can not exist without the other. A motion (Padien, Connor) to approve the minutes of the meeting held on November 21, 2011, as amended carried with a vote of 4-0-1 with Sean McGarry abstaining.

Reports

Elizabeth Conner reported that a parent had approached her to ask about a public comment section on the agenda and wondered if one should be included. Committee members were split on this issue and Mr. Hicks agreed to research it.

Mr. Hicks stated that the fiscal report is slightly more positive than last month's, which comes from booking savings from retirement contributions. A motion (Padien, Doyle) to accept the fiscal report through November 30, 2011, as presented carried with a vote of 5-0.

The 2011-12 NESDEC Enrollment Projections report, which continues to show a drop in enrollment, was submitted for School Committee information. Mr. Hicks stated that in previous years 100 percent or more of the children born to island families entered kindergarten and now that trend has been reversed with less than 100 percent enrolling. This could be due to the difficulties in obtaining housing.

Mr. Hicks reported that on December 14 Johnson Controls met with the Town Council and several members of the School Committee to present several energy saving measures, which were identified during the investment grade audit. Mr. Hicks submitted a list of projects that included retrofitting light fixtures, lighting fixture controls, attic insulation, kitchen hood exhaust fan, and computer management system. Some had a payback of 15 years or less based on current electric rates, but this also included rebates from National Grid and Block Island isn't part of that system. However, we are not obligated to do all of the projects and more information is needed on whether applications must be submitted to RIDE for these projects.

Old Business

Pursuant to School Committee Bylaws, policies require action by a majority of the School Committee at two successive regular meetings or a unanimous vote of all five members at a regular meeting. Policy IK-1: Discipline was presented for a second vote because only four

committee members were present at last month's meeting. A motion (Padien, Hall) to approve Policy IK-1: Discipline as written carried with a vote of 5-0.

A calendar for the 2012-2013 school year that included an extra day for the Thanksgiving and February recesses was submitted for review. Sean McGarry stated that he felt the school should at least experiment with a March vacation instead of the usual February and April breaks. This would give two solid academic blocks (beginning of January until March vacation; end of March vacation until the end of school in June) instead of the one (end of February vacation until the beginning of April vacation). In addition, Mr. McGarry felt the April vacation is difficult to work around when businesses are gearing up for the new season. A motion (Padien, Doyle) to approve the 2012-2013 school calendar as presented carried with a vote of 4-1 with Sean McGarry voting in the negative.

Mr. Hicks stated that the public work session held on Thursday, December 15 was not as well attended as he had wished, but he presented the proposed schedule revision to about ten parents, six teachers, and four students. There was consensus among School Committee members and parents that something needs to be done to ensure that students are in class and that athletics are not taking the place of academics. Mr. Hicks submitted a sheet that summarized and answered some of the comments made at the work session. He researched "game creep" and found that the athletic schedules expanded by about 15 percent. Taking those games away would bring the days missed from 18 to 15, which is not enough to resolve the issue. Scheduling home and/or away games during the week (Monday-Thursday) was also discussed and it was felt that it should be limited in number unless a game could be played at home after school, with the mainland team leaving Block Island on the 6:30 boat. More feedback is needed from elementary teachers and families on the plan as they are being asked to change for the betterment of the school. Mr. Hicks will draft a letter for the Block Island Times in the hopes of soliciting additional feedback. More information is needed on what the last two periods would be on Fridays, what the starting and ending times would be throughout the week, and how this would affect town and part-time employees.

New Business

Mr. Hicks explained that the issuance of a Regents Commended Diploma begins with the class of 2014 and Policy FBF: High School Proficiency Graduation needed to be changed to reflect that. The requirements for a Block Island School student to receive this type of diploma include a score of proficient or higher in the most recent administration of reading, mathematics, and science state assessments. The state does not require the science assessment for the Regents diploma and Mr. Hicks was asked if our students would be at a disadvantage if other communities do not require this piece. Mr. Hicks will survey other superintendents to see what they require. A motion (Padien, Doyle) to post Policy FBF-1: High School Proficiency Graduation for the required 30 days with the added wording in the beginning carried with a vote of 5-0.

A motion (Hall, Connor) to approve the request from Jeana Rachels to home school her son, Zachery Marsella, for the remainder of the 2011-2012 school year using the Pen Foster online program carried with a vote of 5-0.

A list of proposed School Committee meeting dates for 2012 was submitted for review. It was noted that the January, February and April meetings should not be held on the third Monday

because of the Martin Luther King holiday and the winter/spring recesses. Mr. Hicks also requested that the September meeting be changed because it would occur on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. It was suggested that September's meeting be held on the third Tuesday (the 18th). A motion (Connor, Hall) to approve the 2012 meeting schedule as amended carried with a vote of 5-0.

Mr. Hicks submitted a memorandum proposing the structure and process for developing the 2012-2013 budget. A timeline, similar to last year's, will be followed, with the superintendent's budget being presented at the regular meeting scheduled for January 9. Two expense work sessions will be held on January 23 and February 6. It is hoped that the budget can be adopted at the regular meeting scheduled for February 13.

Calendar of Events

The next regular School Committee meeting has been scheduled for Monday, January 9, 2012.

Correspondence

Correspondence was received from a parent of a student attending St. Andrew's School commending our boys' varsity basketball team for how well they represented Block Island School and community during a recent tournament at Rocky Hill.

Adjournment

A motion (Padien, Doyle) at 9:00 p.m. to adjourn carried with a vote of 5-0.

Marsha L. Gutierrez, Clerk

Date approved: January 9, 2012